

EU SPOTLIGHT

No. 1, December 2005



Österreich 2006 • Präsidentschaft der Europäischen Union
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U.S. GOVERNMENT ITEMS

[Review of European Security Issues, December 16](#)

December 16, 2005

Humanitarian mission in Pakistan; Bosnia peacekeeping mission; Kosovo status talks; U.S. Navy to leave Sardinia; Hungary donates T-72 tanks to Iraq; Afghanistan reconstruction-team workshop; U.N. Mission in Cyprus

[State's Fried Urges Europe To Support Fully Iraq's New Government](#)

U.S. diplomat also discusses Iran and allegations regarding detainees

By Vince Crawley, Washington File Staff Writer, December 14, 2005

Washington – A U.S. diplomat is calling on Europe to fully support the next elected government of Iraq.

However, allegations of secret CIA detention centers for terror suspects could undermine the past year's significant gains in trans-Atlantic cooperation, according to Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs.

"Let me acknowledge that the detainee issue is challenging and remains serious to people in this country and in Europe," Fried said December 14 at the American Enterprise Institute, a nonpartisan, nonprofit policy research institute. His remarks were followed by a question-and-answer session with journalists and embassy staff members. ..."

[VIDEO FILE OF SPEECH](#) **"Bridge over Troubled Waters: Putting Transatlantic Relations Back on Track"** by Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, D.C., December 14, 2005

[U.S. Challenges European Union Criticism on Food Aid Issues](#)

Successful trade round still best development tool, officials say

By John Schaffer, Washington File Staff Writer, December 14, 2005

Washington -- U.S. officials have lashed out at the Europe Union (EU) for distorting food aid issues at global trade negotiations in Hong Kong, calling their position "irresponsible" and urging EU trade ministers to start negotiating broader global agricultural reform.

The food issue has become central to the trade negotiations, scheduled to conclude at the end of 2006, because many developing country food producers believe that government agricultural supports from industrial countries are preventing developing country farmers from competing in world markets.

The European Union has charged that the United States' practice of buying grain from U.S. farmers and giving it away as food aid amounts to a subsidy. U.S. officials say European food assistance has dropped significantly and to change the U.S. program would be to deprive starving people of much-needed food.

The bilateral dispute threatens to block further progress in the December 13-18 Hong Kong meeting, and nongovernmental organizations have raised concern that the disagreement could result in a decline in food and disaster assistance.

[TRANSCRIPT OF BRIEFING](#) by USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios and Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Karan Bhatia, WTO Hong Kong Ministerial, December 14, 2005

[U.S.-EU Pact Could Revolutionize Air Travel, U.S. Official Says](#)

Transportation official says changes would enhance competition in "dramatic way"

By Vince Crawley, Washington File Staff Writer, December 9, 2005

Washington – A tentative Open Skies agreement to deregulate air travel between the United States and the European Union could revolutionize trans-Atlantic passenger service by allowing free-market competition for routes and fares, a senior U.S. official says.

"A U.S.-EU aviation agreement would not only bring an entirely new level of liberalization to trans-Atlantic air services, but would facilitate the most important reinvention of international aviation we have ever seen," Jeffrey N. Shane, Under Secretary for Policy at the Department of Transportation (DOT) said December 8.

"It can be expected to enhance the quality of competition across the Atlantic in a dramatic way," Shane said, speaking to the Royal Aeronautical Society in Montreal.

TRANSCRIPT OF SPEECH "Air Transport Liberalization: Ideal and Ordeal" by Jeffrey N. Shane, Under Secretary for Policy, U.S. Department of Transportation, Royal Aeronautical Society, Montreal, Canada, December 8, 2005

EU Must Cut Farm Tariffs in Trade Talks, United States Insists

USTR Portman urges Europe to find a way, despite "ambiguous" mandate

By Bruce Odessey, Washington File Staff Writer, December 9, 2005

Washington -- The European Union (EU) must find a way to lower agricultural tariffs sharply if long-stalled World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations ever are to succeed, U.S. Trade Representative Rob Portman says.

Agriculture remains the key to unlocking progress in the parallel negotiations for opening markets in manufactured goods and services, Portman said December 9 at a press conference days ahead of a WTO ministerial meeting in Hong Kong.

TRANSCRIPT OF NEWS CONFERENCE with Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns and United States Trade Representative, Ambassador Rob Portman Regarding WTO Negotiations, Washington, D.C., December 9, 2005

Bush, Austria's Schuessel Discuss Human Rights, U.S.-EU Relations

White House echoes Rice's comments in Europe against torture

By Stephen Kaufman, Washington File White House Correspondent, December 8, 2005

Washington -- President Bush welcomed Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel to the White House December 8 for a meeting covering a broad range of U.S. and European bilateral issues, including cooperation in the War on Terror and human rights.

White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan said Bush and the Austrian leader discussed the importance of human rights and the need for their promotion, especially in "those countries where they are denied and routinely violated."

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS BRIEFING by Scott McClellan, The White House, Washington, D.C., December 8, 2005



President George W. Bush and Austria Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel exchange handshakes during the Chancellor's visit Thursday, Dec. 8, 2005, to the White House. White House photo by Eric Draper

U.S. and EU Ministers Advance IPR, Regulatory Cooperation, Other Issues

Media Note, Office of the Spokesman, U.S. Department of State, December 6, 2005

The United States and the European Union made significant advances in addressing intellectual property rights (IPR) enforcement, regulatory cooperation, technology and innovation and other issues at their first informal economic ministerial meeting, which concluded November 30 in Brussels.

The ministerial "provided an excellent opportunity to review the progress since the 2005 U.S.-EU summit in June," said E. Anthony Wayne, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs,

who attended the meeting. In an important development, the ministerial "signaled a significant positive shift in U.S.-EU relations in the area of intellectual property rights protection and enforcement," Wayne said. "Our governments agreed to work more closely together to protect the industries on which our economies so heavily rely."



Secretary Rice speaks with reporters before traveling to Europe from Andrews Air Force Base, Md., Monday, Dec. 5, 2005. AP/Wide World photo

[Rice Says United States Does Not Torture Terrorists](#)

Secretary says "rendition" vital, legal tool to combat terrorism, save lives

December 5, 2005

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice says the United States does not permit or tolerate the torture of any terrorists detained in its custody.

"The United States has not transported anyone, and will not transport anyone, to a country when we believe he will be tortured. Where appropriate, the United States seeks assurances that transferred

persons will not be tortured," Rice said December 5

at Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington

before departing for a four-day trip to Europe.

However, she did not discuss news reports that the CIA runs secret U.S. detention centers in certain East European countries.

"We cannot discuss information that would compromise the success of intelligence, law enforcement, and military operations," she said.

[TRANSCRIPT OF REMARKS](#) Upon Her Departure for Europe, by Secretary Condoleezza Rice, Andrews Air Force Base, December 5, 2005

[United States "Disappointed" with EU Banana Tariff Proposal](#)

USTR spokeswoman says "unilateral proposal" fails to maintain market access

December 2, 2005

Washington -- The United States "remains very disappointed" with the new European Union (EU) proposal for import tariffs on bananas from most favored nation (MFN) suppliers from Latin America, according a statement issued by the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) December 1.

On November 29, the EU member states agreed to impose an import tariff of 176 euros per metric ton on bananas for MFN suppliers, and also a duty-free annual import quota of 775,000 tons for bananas from the African Caribbean Pacific (ACP) group of countries. The measures are set to enter into force January 1, 2006, according to a European Council press release issued that day.

Under a 2001 agreement, the European Union agreed to move from a complex import system based on a combination of tariffs and quotas for MFN bananas to a regime based solely on a tariff by January 1, 2006.

[U.S., EU Agree on Trade Concessions Tied to EU Expansion](#)

EU member states must approve enlargement compensation package

December 1, 2005

The United States and the European Union (EU) have agreed on a comprehensive package of EU trade concessions to compensate the United States for tariff increases the EU implemented as a result of its May 2004 expansion.

The agreement, announced by U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Rob Portman November 30, reduces several EU tariffs and expands a number of EU tariff rate quotas on a broad range of agriculture and industrial goods. It is subject to approval by EU member states and is expected to go into effect during 2006, according to a USTR press release.

On May 1, 2004, 10 countries acceded to the European Union and were required to change their tariff schedules to conform to the EU's common external tariff schedule, resulting in increased tariffs on certain imported products. Under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the United States is entitled to compensation from the EU to offset some of those changes.

[PRESS RELEASE](#) "United States and European Communities Reach Agreement on Enlargement Compensation Package", Office of the United States Trade Representative, November 30, 2005

[United States, European Union Hold Informal Economic Ministerial](#)

Commerce Secretary, EU officials meet in Brussels, Belgium

30 November 2005

The United States and the European Union held their first informal economic ministerial meeting in Brussels, Belgium, November 30 as a follow-up to commitments made at the U.S.-EU summit

in June concerning closer trans-Atlantic cooperation on issues such as intellectual property rights (IPR), regulatory cooperation, trade and security and improving innovation. The U.S. delegation, led by Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez, met with Vice President of the European Commission Günter Verheugen, EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson and other top officials. The delegations agreed to concrete action plans and timelines to tackle the most significant issues in the trans-Atlantic economy, according to a press release from the Council of the European Union.

[PRESS RELEASE \(pdf\)](#) "EU-U.S. First Informal Economic Ministerial Meeting," Council of the European Union, Brussels, November 30, 2005

[European Union Profile](#)

Fact Sheet, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs/ U.S. Department of State, October 4, 2005

The European Union (EU) is one of the United States' strongest strategic partners, with the importance of the relationship reflected in our close cooperation on regional crises and conflicts, our extensive collaboration on a wide range of global challenges, from counter-terrorism to nonproliferation, and our deep trade and investment relations...

The United States and the EU are important partners who maintain a robust agenda of cooperation in areas such as the Middle East, Balkans, Ukraine, Central Asia, and Africa.

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CRS REPORTS FOR CONGRESS

Congressional Research Service/ Library of Congress

[U.S.-EU Cooperation Against Terrorism](#)

Updated July 12, 2005

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks gave new momentum to European Union (EU) initiatives to improve law enforcement cooperation against terrorism both among its 25 member states and with the United States. Washington has largely welcomed these efforts, recognizing that they may help root out terrorist cells and prevent future attacks. However, the United States and the EU continue to face several challenges as they seek to promote closer cooperation in the police, judicial, and border control fields. This report will be updated as needed.

[The European Union in 2005 and Beyond](#)

Updated July 11, 2005

The European Union (EU) has experienced significant changes over the last few years. The EU has enlarged from 15 to 25 members and has been working to implement a new constitutional treaty to institute internal reforms and further political integration. The EU has also taken steps toward developing a common foreign policy and defense arm. This report describes the current status of the EU's constitutional treaty, EU enlargement, the EU's evolving foreign and defense policies, and possible implications for U.S.-EU relations.

[U.S.-European Union Trade Relations: Issues and Policy Challenges](#)

Updated June 20, 2005

Major U.S.-EU trade challenges can be grouped into five categories: (1) complying with WTO rulings; (2) resolving longstanding trade disputes involving aerospace production subsidies and beef hormones; (3) dealing with different public concerns over new technologies and new industries; (4) fostering cooperative competition policies; and (5) strengthening the multilateral trading system.

[European Union Enlargement](#)

Updated June 10, 2005

On May 1, 2004, 10 states joined the European Union (EU), enlarging the Union to 25 members. The EU views the enlargement process as a historic opportunity to promote stability and prosperity in Europe. In addition to the 10 new members (Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia), Bulgaria and Romania hope to

accede to the EU in 2007. Turkey and Croatia began accession negotiations in October 2005. Macedonia has also applied for EU membership.

[The European Union: Questions and Answers](#)

Updated June 10, 2005

This report provides answers to key questions related to the European Union (EU). It describes the EU's evolution, its governing institutions, trade policy, and efforts to forge common foreign and defense policies. The report also addresses the EU-U.S. and EU-NATO relationships.

[The United States and Europe: Current Issues](#)

Updated June 10, 2005

The United States and Europe share a long and intertwined history. Despite the end of the Cold War, both sides of the Atlantic continue to face a common set of international concerns, have few other comparable partners, and share a huge economic relationship. Nevertheless, numerous foreign policy and trade conflicts have seriously challenged U.S.-European relations in recent years. This report examines the current state of the transatlantic relationship and key issues in Europe and beyond that have implications for U.S. interests.

[The European Union's Constitution](#)

Updated June 10, 2005

In June 2004, the European Union (EU) concluded work on a constitutional treaty that contains changes to the EU's governing institutions and decision-making processes. Commonly referred to as the "constitution," this new treaty aims to institute internal reforms to enable a larger EU to operate effectively and prevent gridlock, but it must be ratified by all member states to enter into force. The future of the EU's constitution, however, has been thrown in doubt after French and Dutch voters rejected it in separate referenda in May and June 2005. This report provides background information on the constitution, its key provisions, the current crisis, and possible implications for U.S.-EU relations.

[The European Parliament](#)

Updated April 5, 2005

The 732-member, directly-elected European Parliament (EP) is a key institution of the 25-member European Union (EU). Once limited to being a consultative assembly, the EP has accumulated more power over time. Currently, it plays a role in the EU's legislative and budgeting processes, and exercises general supervision over other EU bodies. The EP continues to face several challenges, however, especially in relation to its democratic legitimacy and operational costs. The most recent EP elections were held in June 2004.

[The United States and Europe: Possible Options for U.S. Policy](#)

Updated March 8, 2005

This report assesses the present state of the U.S.-European relationship and the reasons for current frictions. To stimulate debate and for the purposes of analysis, it also offers a spectrum of possible options for U.S. policymakers in considering the future shape of the political and strategic dimensions of the transatlantic partnership.

[NATO and the European Union](#)

Updated May 12, 2005

This report addresses several questions central to the debate over European security and the future of the broader transatlantic relationship.

[EU-U.S. Economic Ties: Framework, Scope, and Magnitude](#)

Updated April 15, 2005

U.S. and EU policymakers will continually face the task of how to manage the increasingly complex bilateral economic relationship in ways that maximize benefits and keep frictions to a minimum. For Members of Congress it means weighing the benefits of greater economic integration against the costs to constituents in the context of overall U.S. national interests.

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MEDIA ITEMS

(If you are interested in receiving any of the articles listed below, please contact arc@usembassy.at)

Working with the European Union

By Leslie S. Lebl, *Orbis*, Winter 2006

The past year saw growing uncertainty about the future of the European Union. Whether it becomes weaker or stronger, and whether it acts as a global partner of competitor, the United States cannot afford to ignore the EU. By understanding the different EU decision-making processes for defense, foreign policy, counter-terrorism, and economic issues, the United States can do a better job of advancing its interests in Europe.

Europe Inside Out

By Robin Niblett, *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter 2005-06

Six months after the French and Dutch rejections of the European Union's constitutional treaty, Europe is still in shock. Member states remain in a self-mandated period of reflection in the hope that they can reach a new consensus on how to achieve their "ever-closer union." Yet, the more time that passes, the more it becomes apparent that the basic foundations on which the process of European integration has been built over the past 50 years are now under assault. The EU's expansion from 15 to 25 members in May 2004 created new fissures that cannot be smoothed over with the sorts of trade-offs arranged in the past by its original West European member states, led by France and Germany. Is this then just the most recent in a series of temporary crises that have punctuated the EU's history and have generally served, in the end, to provide a new impetus for the process of integration, or should a gradual loosening of the EU or even a collapse of its key institutions be expected?

New Directions for Transatlantic Security Cooperation

By James Dobbins, *Survival*, December 2005

Western armies are masters of the conventional battlefield, but continue to have difficulty prevailing in unconventional conflict. Yet unconventional missions, including peacekeeping, counterinsurgency, counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism, are the only kind that NATO or EU forces are likely to be collectively assigned for the foreseeable future. These, then, should be the focus for NATO and EU planning, training and equipping. While the UN is the cheapest, most generally acceptable and often most effective instrument for managing international military interventions, there is an effective ceiling beyond which the UN will not suffice. The UN does not do forced entries, and has never fielded more than about 20,000 troops in any single operation. Where these thresholds must be surpassed, NATO, the EU or an ad hoc coalition will be needed. Afghanistan is the next test for Western collective defence efforts. Success there will require greater EU as well as NATO engagement.

The Transatlantic Agenda: Vision and Counter-Vision

By Lawrence Freedman, *Survival*, December 2005

Underlying the transatlantic tensions of recent years is a philosophical gap between visionaries who can imagine, for example, a radical democratic reordering of the Arab Middle East, and counter-visionaries who worry more about costs and unintended consequences. The fundamental issue is strategic. It concerns the readiness to acknowledge and adjust to the power of others, however undesired, illegitimate, inconvenient and awkward this power may be. By and large, the counter-visionaries believe that the visionaries go wrong by always seeking to ignore, circumvent or defeat opponents. This disagreement between visionaries and counter-visionaries is not simply one of Americans versus Europeans, although it has recently turned out that way. While the limits to the ability of Western states to promote political change elsewhere have become apparent, and so the transatlantic disagreement has eased, questions of ideology and legitimacy are still vital, as is evident in the debates about how to deal with China and Iran. In some respects liberal democracies cannot help but provide a strategic vision for those coping with authoritarianism, but the potency of this vision in the end will depend on how well it seems to work at home, and the capacity of the transatlantic states to cope with the domestic as well as the international challenges they face.

The End of Europe?

By Laurent Cohen-Tanugi, *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2005

Since French and Dutch voters rejected the European constitution last spring, the EU has been in crisis. The treaty debacle did not cause the EU's current troubles; the EU's long-standing problems caused voters' dissatisfaction. But the way out of the impasse should involve pragmatic steps to improve EU economics, not legal or institutional reforms.

A Too Perfect Union? Why Europe Said "No"

By Andrew Moravcsik, *Current History*, November 2005

Voter rejection this spring of a continental constitution did not signify the decline and fall of the European Union. It merely sounded the death knell of an impossible dream.

Future of the European Union - Has European integration been a success?

CQ Researcher, October 28, 2005

Some 50 years ago, six nations joined in the first European federation. Now, with the addition of 10 nations in 2004, the European Union (EU) comprises 25 countries with a combined economy nearly equal to that of the United States and a population half again as large. EU supporters claim the Union has brought peace to the continent and spread prosperity by eliminating trade barriers. But further integration suffered a setback last spring when French and Dutch voters rejected the EU's proposed constitution. Opponents used the vote to register concerns about high unemployment, slow growth and increased immigration. Supporters said the constitution would have made the EU a more workable federation. With the constitution shelved for now, the EU faces another controversy: whether to admit predominantly Muslim Turkey.

Europe's Dream Disturbed

By Conrad Black, *The National Interest*, Fall 2005

Black discusses the rejection of the proposed European Union constitution. The first message of the French and Dutch rejection of the constitution is that those Europeans more interested in a common market and a high level of cooperation among states-but not the surrender of national sovereignty-have finally punctured the Euro-balloon that all Europe wanted to be emancipated from the straitjacket of national identity. Conrad Black is a member of the Advisory Council of The National Interest.

The European Union Is Dead

By John C. Hulsman and William L. T. Schirano, *The National Interest*, Fall 2005

Given the empirical realities of no votes, the failure of the recent budget talks at the EU summit, and huge strains over enlargement, Europe is likely to remain static, not coherent enough to be either strongly pro- or anti-American. Hulsman and Schirano discuss the collapse of Europe's effort to unify individual countries and its implications on US-Europe relations. John C. Hulsman is senior research fellow in European affairs at the Heritage Foundation. William L. T. Schirano is research assistant in foreign policy at the Heritage Foundation.

Transatlantic Tension and Threat Perception

By Mary Sarotte, *Naval War College Review*, Autumn 2005

Sarotte, professor of political science at the University of Cambridge, discusses why Americans and Europeans often "talk past each other" in discussions about security issues. Americans tend to see the primary role of the federal government as defending the nation's territorial integrity (homeland security), whereas Europeans expect much more from their national leaders, such as free (or low-cost) health care and university-level education, national news broadcasting and public transportation. When the U.S. describes the threats that it perceives -- terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction -- it faces a great deal of skepticism due to the failings by U.S. intelligence prior to the Iraq war. For many European political leaders, terrorism is an "old problem," and they feel more threatened by Russia than by WMD in Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. If both sides better understand these perceptual differences, Sarotte notes, they will be better able to deal with each other in the future.

How Wide Is the Atlantic?

By Victor Davis Hanson, Danielle Pletka, James Glassman and Thomas Donnelly, *The American Enterprise*, October-December 2005

Hanson et al offer very different views on the future of the relationship between America and Europe. Among others, Hanson claims that the new chasm between Europe and the United States seems to widen still—even as transatlantic diplomats assure us that it has narrowed—despite a common heritage and a supposedly shared goal of global democracy, free markets, and defeating terrorists. TAE contributing writer Victor Davis Hanson is a scholar of military history. Danielle Pletka is vice president for foreign and defense policy studies at AEI. TAE contributing writer James Glassman is a resident fellow at AEI. Thomas Donnelly is a resident fellow at AEI.

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THINK TANK ITEMS

[U.S. Treatment of Terror Suspects and U.S.-EU Relations](#)

By Mary Crane

Background Q&A, Council of Foreign Relations, December 6, 2005

In response to media reports that the United States is detaining top al-Qaeda suspects in secret prisons in eight countries, including Romania and Poland, European officials have launched a series of investigations. These moves follow a spate of stories in Europe alleging that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is ferrying terrorist suspects by air between the so-called black sites and countries in the Middle East that regularly torture detainees. The allegations have deepened dismay among European Union (EU) members over Washington's conduct leading up to the Iraq war, which was widely unpopular in Europe, as well as over revelations of torture in U.S.-run facilities inside Iraq and Afghanistan.

[Challenges Facing Europe in a World of Globalization](#)

By Helle C. Dale

Heritage Lecture #914, The Heritage Foundation, November 28, 2005

"Thank you for inviting me to speak here today at Hanover College. I will be looking at one of the profound problems besetting Europe: the lack of economic liberalization among some of the European Union's biggest countries. Whether the EU has grand ambitions to become a superpower or not, whether it sees itself creating a new international order or wants to enlarge into Asia and North Africa, I think that without the willingness to tackle rigidity and stagnation in the major EU economies, the project will not have much of a chance. ..."

[The Rebirth of Vision: A Dynamic Compromise for Europe](#) (pdf)

By Pierre Hassner, Director of Research, CERI-Science Po

U.S.-Europe Analysis Series, The Brookings Institution, November 2005

Three visions of Europe's political-economic future emerged in the postwar years. The first, that of the Integrationists Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, sought to build new institutions that might unite the peoples of Europe. It aimed, without destroying Europe's nation-states, to develop sub-national, supra-national and trans-national institutions that would effectively preclude the possibility of conflict on the continent. ...

The second vision, that of de Gaulle, was based on the independence of states rather than the interdependence of societies, on the permanence of nations instead of on their obsolescence, and above all, on the ambition to liberate Europe from the guardianship of the "two hegemonies" of the United States and the Soviet Union. ...

Finally, the third vision, that of the British, had in common with Gaullist Europe a concern for maintaining national sovereignty and a mistrust of federalism and European bureaucracy. But there the resemblance ended. Economically, the British vision described a vast free trade area in which market mechanisms would prevail. Politically, it imagined preserving the traditional British role of arbiter among the continental powers. ...

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NEWS FROM AUSTRIA

Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Events

Visit of the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament, Vienna, 19 December 2005

Program & Press Events:

http://www.eu2006.at/info/en/EP_Zusatzinformation/Programm_und_Pressetermine.html

Participants: http://www.eu2006.at/info/en/EP_Zusatzinformation/Teilnehmer.html

Working Meeting Austrian Federal Government – European Commission, Vienna, 9 January 2006

Program & Press Events:

http://www.eu2006.at/info/en/EK_Zusatzinformationen/Programm_und_Pressetermine.html

Press Releases

[Austrian diplomatic presence in Iraq during EU Presidency](#)

Gudrun Harrer to be special envoy to Baghdad, December 13, 2005

Vienna, December 13 2005 - At today's Ministerial Council, Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik announced that Austria would have a diplomatic presence in Iraq during its EU Presidency.

"A secure, stable and unified Iraq is also in the interests of the European Union. For this reason the EU Member States participate actively to the best of their ability in the international efforts to support Iraq in its political and economic reconstruction," said Plassnik.

[“Agreement on Financial Perspective necessary and possible“](#)

Council Meeting of Foreign Ministers in preparation for the forthcoming EU summit, December 12, 2005

Brussels, 12 December 2005 - "Today's meeting is devoted to the preparations for the European Council of 15 and 16 December," said Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik.

"It is regrettable and not very helpful that no new British proposal for the Financial Perspective has been put forward. However, an agreement at the European Council is still possible. It is also necessary because the Union needs a sign that it is able to act," continued Plassnik.

The Foreign Ministers discussed the recommendation of the European Commission to grant candidate status to Macedonia as an acknowledgement of the remarkable progress made since 2001, when the country was on the brink of civil war. "Austria is in favour of granting candidate status to Macedonia," declared the Foreign Minister.

[“The future of the Balkans lies with the European Union”](#)

State Secretary Winkler at the Conference of the Ministers of Justice of the countries of South-Eastern Europe, December 6, 2005

Vienna, 6 December 2005 - "The gradual rapprochement of the countries of the Balkans with the European Union provides strong incentives for reform and makes a decisive contribution to peace and prosperity in the region," said State Secretary Hans Winkler in his speech at the Conference of Ministers of Justice of the countries of South-Eastern Europe in Vienna.

"As part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, a further rapprochement of the countries in the Balkans with the EU will be a priority of Austria's Council Presidency," emphasised Winkler. The State Secretary spoke of the progress made by the various countries towards membership of the European Union. He also pointed out, however, that the countries must take energetic steps to continue and implement the democratic, constitutional and economic reforms in the region.

“Europe in action”: European foreign policy in the Middle East in the service of peace

Active participation by Austria in the EU Border Assistance Mission in Rafah, December 6, 2005

Vienna, 6 December 2005 - "For the first time Israel and the Palestinian authorities have made a joint request to the European Union to provide support in the opening of the border crossing for goods in transit at Rafah. This is a sign that the demand for Europe in the world is increasing. The growing number of civilian EU missions also demonstrates that the importance of civilian crisis management is on the increase within the European Union," said Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik today following the Ministerial Council.

"The EU Border Assistance Mission in Rafah makes a very specific contribution to improving confidence and stability in the Middle East. Austria will take an active part in this important mission, which will enhance stability and the rule of law in the Middle East," said the Foreign Minister.

“Strengthening cooperation between the OSCE and the EU”

Foreign Minister at the 13th OSCE Ministerial Council in Ljubljana, December 5, 2005

Ljubljana, 5 December 2005 - "We shall endeavour in agreement with the other Member States during our EU Presidency in the first half of 2006 to further strengthen the cooperation between the OSCE and the EU," explained Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik in her speech at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Ljubljana.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe is vital to stability and democracy. The year 2005, which marks the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act and the 15th anniversary of the Charter of Paris, is an appropriate occasion to review the role of the OSCE. Our rapidly changing times call for adaptations and adjustments," said Plassnik, "although we must also be aware that the OSCE is founded on a well established set of commitments."

"Step by step is a smart strategy"

European Neighbourhood Policy is one of the priorities of Austria's EU Presidency, December 5, 2005

Ljubljana, 5 December 2005 - On the sidelines of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik met for talks with her Ukrainian counterpart Boris Tarasjuk today. Issues on the top of the agenda were the relationships of Ukraine to the European Union and the OSCE, and the domestic policy situation in Ukraine before the parliamentary elections of March 2006.

"Traditionally, very good bilateral relations unite us with Ukraine. Particularly the last few months saw intensified political, economic and parliamentary contacts," said the Foreign Minister.

"The political reforms of the past year have brought new dynamics into Ukrainian domestic policy, which has also had a positive effect on rapprochement with European structures.

Rapprochement is taking place step by step on the basis of the Action Plan of the European Neighbourhood Policy. This custom-made approach is a smart strategy for both sides," stated Plassnik.

“Human rights are an integral component of all actions by the EU”

State Secretary Winkler at a meeting of Amnesty International on the human rights responsibility of the EU, December 2, 2005

Vienna, 2 December 2005 - "The question of human rights is a cornerstone of Austrian foreign policy and will also play an essential role during our Presidency of the Council," said State Secretary Hans Winkler in his speech at an Amnesty International conference on the human rights responsibility of the EU. "Human rights are not a separate element but an integral component of all actions by the EU," stressed the State Secretary.

In his speech, Winkler discussed the human rights priorities during Austria's Presidency of the Council. "In spite of the many positive developments, we still face great challenges. Specific improvements and reforms in legislation and action must bring a tangible amelioration for people." Particular focuses according to Winkler will be the continued support of the worldwide abolition of the death penalty, the prohibition of torture and abuse, and greater cooperation between the EU and the United Nations in protecting and supporting children and women during and after the termination of armed conflicts. In this context, the State Secretary mentioned the increasing commitment and responsibility of the EU in worldwide peace missions.

“EU Presidency 2006 is a service to the Community”

State Secretary Winkler in the Federal Council on the priorities of Austria's EU

Presidency in 2006, December 1, 2005

Vienna, 1 December 2006 - "We regard the role of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union not as a platform for presenting our country but as a service to the Community," said State Secretary Hans Winkler today in his speech before the Chamber of Provinces of the Austrian Parliament.

Winkler presented the White Paper on the priorities of Austria's Presidency, which was drafted by the Federal Ministry with the participation and support of all ministries. "The White Paper is designed to give everyone interested in the EU and the Presidency a compact and comprehensive overview of the forthcoming themes and the Austrian priorities," continued Winkler.

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